



**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCIL**  
**Children and Domestic Violence Committee**  
**Minutes**

December 3, 2018 at 10:00 a.m.  
Division of Family Services – University Plaza

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The DVCC Children and Domestic Violence Committee took place on Monday, December 3, 2018, at the Division of Family Services office in Newark. Those in attendance were Natasha Smith (DVCC staff), Trenee Parker (DFS), Mary Skaats (P&P), Ava Carcirieri (Family Court), Colleen Woodall (DFS), Bridget Walters (Child Inc.), Michele Ostafy (Child Inc.), Rose Camps (Children and Families First), Anna Gibbs (Seed of Hope), Moe Monagle (DVCC Staff), Marcey Rezac (DCADV), Trish Monogue (Youth Response Unit). Present for the meeting via phone were Blanche Creech (Peoples Place), Jane Galli (Child Inc.), Lori Sitler (Child Inc.), Nancy McGee (SAND), Jennifer Ranji (Family Court), Sonya Tull (Child Inc.), Michael DegliObizzi (DOJ).

Secretary Manning called the meeting to order.

The August 27, 2018 minutes were approved as written.

**Family Court Enhancement Project**

The Family Court Enhancement Project grant is complete. A presentation took place on October 9, 2018, during the Family Court Enhance Project Roundtable with the Governor. This presentation touched on the ongoing work and a sustainability plan for the changes made throughout Family Court with this project.

Ava Carcirieri is the new Domestic Violence Coordinator with Family Court. This position will be used to communicate with the Justice of the Peace Courts, Court of Common Pleas, and Superior Court. Ava will focus on communication with each court. This communication will include who is the best person to contact when there is an open case in another court when a PFA is present. In addition, Ava plans to revive the annual state training on domestic violence. This training would include Family Court staff, as well as Family Court mediators.

Judge Ranji (Family Court) held a meeting with the PFA and Child Custody group. Recently this group focused on bringing the SAFER training to the Judges, Commissioners and Family Law Attorneys. In the Family Law Attorneys session, over 30 family law attorneys attended the training from all 3 counties. The training provided various custody scenarios and how the SAFER tool could be used in those situations.

Additionally, the Court is looking to streamline how PFA and Custody modifications are handled consistently through the court. Judge Ranji also mentioned that Court staff continue to provide PFA notifications to Family Court Judges regarding PFA hearings and pending custody hearings. The notification is provided by placing a paper notification on top of the file and then sent to the Judge with the pending custody petition. Once the Judge receives the file, the judge can choose to hear the PFA petition when there is a custody petition pending. More work with staff needs to be done to make sure Judges receive notification when custody hearings are pending and a PFA is filed.

### **Safe and Together Model**

Domestic Violence Liaisons (DVL) and their Division of Family Services Points of Contact had a November workgroup. The group decided to increase the frequency of meeting to every other month to practice skills and role play between the group. The referral form was updated in October 2018, including adding the consultant piece to the referral form. (Bridget Walters and Kyasia Chavous were instrumental in revising the referral form). The onsite technical assistance day will take place with Safe & Together Institute Associate Director, Kyle Pinto, in January 2019 in the hopes of having maximum attendance. The technical assistance day will focus on providing additional training and coaching to the DVLs. Also, Kyle Pinto will be presenting at the Protecting Delaware's Children conference in April 2019. It is anticipated that Kyle will review the work that has been done thus far in Delaware and exposing more Division of Family Service workers to the Safe and Together Model.

Bridget Walters (Child Inc.) stated that many DFS workers have been using the new referral form. Bridget also states that she has participated in the new worker training and introduced the new referral form. Additionally, every other month Bridget will provide an in-house training to any DFS workers about consultations and input that domestic violence liaisons can provide on cases. Also, Division of Family Services supervisors will receive online training on the Safe & Together Model in 2019.

### **Divorced and Separating Parents curriculum**

Secretary Manning's office will reach out to those who are interested in the topic of the curriculum. This group will meet and report out to the Children & DV committee.

### **Benchcard**

The benchcard was updated for grammatical corrections and referencing the divorce statute. Secretary Manning read the revisions to those present at the meeting. Ellie Torres (Family Court) will provide the benchcard to Family Court Judges/Commissioners for feedback.

Michele Ostafy (Child Inc.) had questions about only the Petitioner being required to take the Divorced and Separating Parenting course. According to the statute, both parties are required to take the course. Michelle states that there are some parents who are out of state and suggested that for those parents a link to the AFCC (Association of Family and Conciliation Courts) should be included on the benchcard and the list of Divorced and Separating Parents classes for those who are out of state. Nancy McGee (SAND) asked if the Divorced and Separating Parenting classes are trauma informed. Secretary Manning expected that the domestic violence component of the class is trauma informed by the nature of the course however there is no procedure in the class to ensure that it is trauma informed. Michele Ostafy suggested talking with Carmella (DPBHS) to discuss this issue.

## **Enhancing Delaware's Community Response for Children Experiencing DV Summary Report**

Secretary Manning suggested that we could create an avenue for particular topics or presentations to be discussed within the committee. Marcey Rezac (DCADV) stated that DCADV has talked about providing a service to help teens or providing a better service to teens. Michelle Ostafy stated that Gabby Coleman (Child Inc.) is able to do presentations to teens about healthy relationships in New Castle County.

A question was raised about the topic of substance exposed infants data. Trenee Parker (DFS) and Colleen Woodall (DFS) confirmed that it is not easy to extract data and it would have to be manually tabulated to get data on this issue. Colleen stated that it may be possible for Jen Donahue's database may have a link between substance exposed infants and domestic violence.

Additionally the topic of child care being provided for PFA day was mentioned as something the group can think about moving forward, particularly about funding.

### **Guidelines for Child Custody Evaluation**

Judge Ranji mentioned concerns involved in a custody disputes that involve a custody evaluation and whether or not any domestic violence in a case should it be included in the custody evaluation. Judge Ranji believed that the case was a Kent County case in which there was a dv history and the custody evaluation may not have included domestic violence history in the evaluation. There are not a large number of cases in which custody evaluations are completed and those that do usually have an attorney.

Additional questions touched on ways to get a better understanding of custody evaluations in Delaware as well as any requirements for a domestic violence history reporting in evaluations. There are not any requirements should there be requirements or standards for custody evaluations.

Secretary Manning stated that Judges are required to take in to consideration about domestic violence history in custody cases however it may not be true for those who are conducting the custody evaluations that are submitted to Family Court Judges.

Suggestions were made to reach out to those who conduct custody evaluations in Delaware. Secretary Manning stated that she will reach out to Dr. Vicky Kelly concerning the custody evaluations and what requirements there may be to disclose any domestic violence history in custody evaluations conducted in Delaware. Lori Sitler (Child Inc.) suggested that the committee look at ACE screens in addition to domestic violence in custody evaluations. Blanche Creech (Peoples Place) stated that it may be helpful to see what is being done in other states on this issue. In addition, Maureen (DVCC) mentioned that the National Board of Forensic Evaluators may have best practice information on domestic violence histories being included in evaluations. Maureen will research this issue. Secretary Manning will reach out to Dr. Vicky Kelly and then reach out to others if necessary.

Marcey (DCADV) raised the topic of finding adequate services in the state for therapeutic visitation.

There were a number of issues that were raised such as:

- What is therapeutic visitation?

- If there are any therapists that are able to provide therapeutic visitation within the state?

- If so, are the therapists aware of the dynamics of domestic violence?

-Is it possible that therapeutic visitation can qualify for VCAP?

Michele Ostafy (Child Inc.) stated that California has a therapeutic visitation model and she will research California's model and present the information back to the committee.

**Children and Families First**

Rose Camps: Children and Families First (CFF) provided an overview of the FAIR (Family Assessment and Intervention Response) to the committee. CFF has had the contract with Delaware's Division of Family Services for about 6 years. The program services children from birth to age 17. They provide an alternative response to Delaware's Division of Family Services methods. Children and Families First mirrors the treatment side of the Division of Family Services. If domestic violence is identified, Children and Families First looks for natural supports and then connects with them in the community. Children and Families First works with low to moderate risk families and put them into two different paths of services.

There are 4 therapists that engage with clients to get their needs met, such as referrals to domestic violence shelters. From January to September 2018 there were about 351 referrals to FAIR. About 40 of these referrals included information about domestic violence.

**Next Meeting Date:**

**Monday, February 25, 2019 at 10am at DFS University Plaza**